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## Playlet: ON TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

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THE SCENE IS THE ANTEROOM OF THE BUSINESS MANAGER'S OFFICE IN A SMALL MIDWESTERN COLLEGE. AT THE BEGINNING OF ANY SCHOOL YEAR THE FACULTY MEMBERS MAY SECURE THE KEYS TO THEIR OFFICES BY COMING TO THE BUSINESS OFFICE AT CERTAIN STATED TIMES. TWO OF THE THREE CENTRAL CHARACTERS OF THIS LITTLE INTERLUDE—MISS ELLEN WORTH OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT (played by Miss Harryetta Peterka) AND DR. TOWNLY OF THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RELATIONS (played by Mr. Delbert Bremicker)—ARE SHOWN IN WHAT WILL PROVE TO BE A FRUITLESS ATTEMPT TO SECURE THEIR KEYS. THE TWO PERSONS AUTHORIZED TO GIVE OUT THE KEYS HAVE GONE FOR COFFEE, FROM WHICH THEY WILL NOT RETURN UNTIL AFTER THE SEGMENT OF EXPERIENCE REPRESENTED HERE WILL HAVE BEEN COMPLETED. THE THIRD PERSON OF THE INTERLUDE (portrayed by Miss Sheila Hill) IS MISS GLORY NELSON, A MEMBER OF THE SENIOR CLASS. A YOUNG LADY OF INTENSE ENTHUSIASM AND CONSIDERABLE POPULARITY ON THE CAMPUS, GLORY HAS TAKEN COURSES WITH BOTH MISS WORTH AND DR. TOWNLY. SHE CONSIDERS THEM BOTH VERY WONDERFUL PROFESSORS. THEY, IN TURN, HAVE THE HIGHEST REGARD FOR HER, ALBEIT IN DESCRIBING HER NEITHER OF THEM

*When Dr. Blair's three students presented this playlet at the Fall, 1955, meeting of the I. A. T. E., the curtain calls would have been numerous if the stage had had a curtain. Since there was none, and since numerous teachers asked to see the play in print, here is something better than a curtain call—a repeat performance.*

WOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER USING SUCH A PRIMITIVELY EMOTION-CHARGED TERM AS "WONDERFUL."

AS THE ACTION OPENS, DR. TOWNLY IS SEEN ENTERING THE ANTEROOM OF THE BUSINESS OFFICE. SOMETHING OF HIS DOUBT AS TO THE POSSIBILITY OF SECURING HIS KEY AT THIS TIME IS EVIDENT, FOR HE PERCEIVES THAT THE WINDOW THROUGH WHICH KEYS ARE PASSED IS CLOSED. EVER THE CHEERFUL OPTIMIST, HOWEVER, DR. TOWNLY DECIDES TO WAIT FOR A FEW MINUTES BEFORE PROCEEDING ONWARD TO A ROUSING GAME OF PINOCHLE AT THE MEN'S FACULTY CLUB. HE HAS JUST COME TO A FULL HALT WHEN GLORY ENTERS HURRIEDLY.

Glory: Dr. Townly! It's good to see you again.

Townly: I should say so. Did you have a good summer?

Glory: Fabulous. I worked in Yellowstone. And you?

Townly: I taught an off-campus workshop.

Glory: Oh, dear.

Townly: It really wasn't bad. The people worked me harder than I worked them, I'm afraid—teachers mostly.

Glory: I bet they were. But I imagine they knew they had a good teacher. You know I thought of sending you a card—one of those great big gorgeous brilliant-colored ones of Old Faithful—with a thank-you note saying how much I enjoyed those wonderful lectures you gave last spring. I might have gotten around to sending one if I hadn't remembered that all old bachelors are chronically suspicious of women and girls who send them little compliments, so I didn't.

Townly: What I can't understand is that people are always telling me about the cards they thought about sending me but never did send.

Glory: Shame on us. You know what I'm going to be doing next week?

Townly: Many fascinating things, no doubt.

Glory: No, seriously—what I'm going to be doing is practice teaching.

Townly: If you're at all the way I was—and I rather think you are, Glory—for the first few days you'll be quaking in your shoes and wondering a couple of times a day why you chose teaching as your profession in the first place.

Glory: That will come later. In this set-up we have now I won't be trying to hold a class for several weeks.



Townly: That's good.

Glory: We're going to begin analyzing different approaches to what we're going to be teaching. I'm going to work on what must be done—what I've got to try to do—when I teach Shakespeare.

Townly: Won't that depend on which play you're going to teach?

Glory: Sure it would—but I'm going to work on the four we can choose from in the last part of my paper—in the payoff, that is, after the first part. In it I'm going to try to put together everything I know about the different plays and the period and try to work out a general scheme of how to soften the kids up for—sigh!—SHAKESPEARE!

Townly: What four can you choose from?

Glory: Macbeth, of course, and Julius Caesar, Hamlet, and Merchant of Venice.

Townly: Did you say Hamlet?

Glory: Umhum.

Townly: In high school?

Glory: Yessir. In our methods class last year I read an article by a teacher of unselected high school seniors in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and she told about how she has been able to get more response on Hamlet than on any other assignment they do during the year.

Townly: I'd like to read that article.

Glory: I think you'd be convinced.

Townly: Don't you think that perhaps many of the students *said* they got the most out of it just to please the teacher who obviously *wanted* them to?

Glory: Oh, I don't know about that. Just look at Miss Worth now. When you take a course with her, even though you know she would *like* for you to express certain things, you know too that she would a lot rather you *didn't* say them unless you actually did believe them. I think most kids more or less unconsciously *sense* that. Some will just automatically whistle the tune you like, but some won't. *Isn't* she a doll? Oh, but I forgot. You simply *loathe* briefcases, don't you?

Townly: I wouldn't be caught dead with one.

MISS WORTH ENTERS AND GREETES THEM BOTH WITH JUST A SHADE OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS, AS IF SHE KNOWS

THEY THINK NEGATIVELY OF PEOPLE WITH BRIEFCASES. DR. TOWNLY BOWS AND GLORIA GOES TO SHAKE HANDS WITH HER.

Glory: Oh, Miss Worth, I'm so glad to see you.

Worth: It's good to see you too, Glory—you're looking so well. Did you have a nice summer?

Glory: I surely did. And you?

Worth: I had a grand time at the university.

Glory: Teaching?

Worth: Oh, dear no; taking courses.

Glory: You?

Worth: Yes—especially me. I felt I needed some—spark-plugging, shall we say?

Glory: Well, maybe you *thought* you did.

Worth: I did.

Glory: All right . . .

Worth: What's troubling you, Glory?

Glory: Nothing.

Worth: Please tell me.

Glory: Well, I'd like to talk to you about the paper I'm going to write, but since you've been in school all summer and are just getting started now here again I don't think I should—

Worth: Nonsense. I'm well started, my dear. See this bulging briefcase? It's full, practically to overflowing, with all my getting started.

Glory: Ha.

Worth: In fact I feel more than a little smug about it.

Townly: Smug about it?

Worth: About what it contains. You know, Dr. Townly, I'm a member of the general curriculum committee for both the college and the campus training schools.

Townly: Yes. I imagine you feel somewhat like a lamb among wolves, being a humanities person with all those high-powered executive types and vocational experts, don't you?

Worth: Not any more, I don't. You see, one thing I did this summer was to do a great deal of reading in educational

theory, and in one of Dewey's definitive works I found a passage that for all time will confute those who seek to minimize the importance of art in general and literature in particular. I'm going to read it aloud tonight in committee and utterly confound my opponents—who shall remain mercifully unidentified.

Glory: It sounds very exciting and mysterious. I wish your professional ethics would evaporate just a little so you could tell me more.

Worth: So do I. But it's really not very exciting—or at least not *dramatically* exciting—and not at all mysterious. It's just another episode in the age-old controversy between the people who think literature is important and the people who don't. It's just that tonight I am at long last able to throw the book at one certain worthy opponent who has flatfootedly—and yes, let's face it, flatheadedly—come out against the stressing of literature and art on any educational level! And he does it in the name of Dewey, claiming that Dewey opposed any distinct emphasis on any subject material without a direct vocational orientation—or at least “practical” in the sense the term is used around here. Well, tonight I'm going to prove the opposite.

Townly: You're going to prove the opposite by quoting Dewey himself?

Worth: I most assuredly am.

Townly: Oh?

Worth: I see I'll have to show you too. I have the passage right here; it's in his book ART AND EXPERIENCE. Would you like to see it?

Townly: I certainly would.

Worth: Well—(OPENING OF BRIEFCASES FINDING THE BOOK AND PASSAGE—)

Glory: How about reading it to us?

Townly: I'm no reader . . . all right, then. (READS—)

“Since the ultimate cause of the union of form and matter in experience is the ultimate relation of undergoing and doing in interaction of a live creature with the world of nature and man, the theories, which separate matter and form, have their ultimate source in neglect of this relation. Qualities are then treated as impressions made by things,



and relations that supply meaning as either associations among impressions, or as something introduced by thought. There *are* enemies of the union of form and matter. But they proceed from our own limitations; they are not intrinsic. They spring from apathy, conceit, self-pity, tepidity, fear, convention, routine, from the factors that obstruct, deflect and prevent vital interaction of the life creature with the environment in which he exists. Only the being who is ordinarily apathetic finds merely transient excitement in a work of art; only one who is depressed, unable to face the situations about him, goes to it merely for medicinal solace through values he cannot find in his world. But art itself is more than a stir of energy in the doldrums of the dispirited, or a calm in the storms of the troubled.

"Through art, meanings of objects that are otherwise dumb, inchoate, restricted, and resisted are clarified and concentrated, and not by thought working laboriously upon them, nor by escape into a world of mere sense, but by creation of a new experience. Sometimes the expansion and intensification is effected by means of

'... some philosophic song

Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.'"

Glory: (interpolating) . . . That's Wordsworth . . . isn't it?

Worth: Yes. (CONTINUES READING)

"sometimes it is brought about by a journey to far places, a venture to

'casements opening on the foam

Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn.'

Glory: (interpolating) . . . Why, that's John Keats!

Worth: Yes; imagine John Dewey quoting the Ode to the Night-  
ingale!

Townly: You don't have to imagine it. Here it is. (CONTINUES READING) "But whatever path the work of art pursues, it, just because it is a full and intense experience, keeps alive the power to experience the common world in its fullness. It does so by reducing the raw materials of that experience to matter ordered through form."

Townly: (FINISHES READING) I wish I could see the reaction of some people on that committee!

Glory: Oh, she'll do it in such a polite, friendly way that no one will feel any cause for embarrassment.

Worth: Maybe—

Townly: You know, Miss Worth, this passage comes as a kind of revelation to me personally.

Worth: I suppose you have been cherishing the general academic misconception that Dewey was sharply opposed to the attitude expressed by the other most influential philosopher of this century.

Townly: Well, not exactly. I've always thought of Santayana as primarily a writer rather than a thinker.

Worth: As if the two weren't usually the same thing! That's the commonest and silliest misconception of all. The inter-relationship of thought and expression has been taken for granted by *literary* critics generally ever since Professor Spingarn at Columbia introduced the ideas of Benedetto Croce to American students. In fact, as Santayana wrote (I've used this one statement so frequently that I give it almost automatically), "Only literature can describe experience, for the excellent reason that the terms of experience are moral and literary from the beginning. Mind is incorrigibly poetical: not because it is not attentive to material facts and practical exigencies, but because, being intensely attentive to them, it turns them into . . . many-colored ideas." Thus Santayana! Needless to say my most worthy opponent has dismissed him with a smile of happy condescension. But now I have Dewey's statements, and I do intend to use them.

Glory: That should end the argument, shouldn't it?

Worth: *Should* is the word, Glory. In any case let's get back to the original point we were discussing—I hope I've proved to you that I am already entirely back in the harness again. And so if you want to talk about your topic while I'm waiting here for my key, there's no reason why you shouldn't. But has your critic teacher already assigned them—the topics, I mean?

Glory: Has she ever! I'm to work on the necessary steps in teaching Shakespeare to high school upperclasses.

Worth: Oh, that's a good one, Glory. Last spring in our methods class the idea began gradually dawning in my mind that we were spending most of the time discussing desirable



and possible procedures without ever once answering the question: what are the *indispensable* ones? We—myself particularly, since I was, after all, “in charge” and presumably responsible—were reminded of people debating what kind of roof they were working on before they had even considered building a foundation for their house. That’s one reason why I went back to school myself this summer; I was determined to try to find some objective standard by which I could separate what is vitally necessary in teaching from what is merely desirable.

Townly: And did you find the absolute truth in a bright little nutshell, Miss Worth?

Worth: No—far from it. In fact, in some ways I find myself even more unsettled than ever. But one thing I did come to that I’m holding quite firmly to is that in teaching anything the teacher’s own personal attitude toward the subject itself is the most important thing.

Townly: More important than his attitude toward his students?

Worth: *As* important, I mean. I realize that I may be treading on your toes, Dr. Townly, but I honestly think that it’s a serious mistake to consider “Human Relations” as a specific area unless we also consider what we do and can and might contribute to other people *through* the relations. In other words, I simply can’t feel that the mere social fact of being with and “getting along with” other people is really the be-all and end-all of human existence. As a matter of fact, I think most teachers do care a great deal about other people, especially their students. The relations are basic, of course, but the big problem is how to enter into them most constructively.

Townly: Ah, yes. “The greatest good for the greatest number.”

Worth: Precisely.

Glory: Right in this connection, Miss Worth, I’m reminded of a point you made once in our freshman English class. That was before I decided to major in English.

Worth: I remember. I still read aloud in my freshman class every year one of your first themes, “Why I Want To Be an Airline Hostess.”

Townly: Quite a shift of orientation, Glory. What was the point you mentioned?



Glory: Well, she explained to us one day that there is a whole group of words—verbs, I mean—in our language that require both indirect objects and direct objects. *Give, tell, and teach*, for instance—you always give something to someone; you always tell or teach someone something—for the simple reason you can't give anything away if you yourself don't have it! I remember she used those examples in making the point that language always refers to experience of some sort, whether imagined or actual. She told us a story about how a little girl said to her younger brother, "Let's play school. You be my pupil and I'll teach you," and he said "You'll teach me *what?*"

Worth: That's one of my better stories, Glory. But in addition to knowing one's subject one must also have a certain positive attitude *toward* it . . . It's a matter of what one of my professors this summer called the "psychological concomitants" that determine not only the material and illustrative materials we select, but the very intonations and gestures we use while presenting them. The *necessary* steps we must take are the mental processes we ourselves must carry on concerning the subject. In teaching Shakespeare, for instance, we must accept what he has to give us before we expect to influence boys and girls to get some part of what he has to offer them. That's true of teaching any of the writers, of course, but I think it's especially true of teaching Shakespeare, since for so long now so much attention has been paid to what he had to give to the people of his own time that we have practically forgotten the last and most important part of what his contemporary Ben Jonson said: "He was not of an age but for all time."

Townly: Miss Worth, are you implying that Shakespeare has a great deal to tell young people of the twentieth century about the kind of world they are living in?

Worth: I certainly am. I don't mean externally and mechanically with reference to telephones and automobiles and airplanes and the countless millions of gadgets we have now; but about themselves and the people they know and live with, yes. Certainly yes.

Townly: But wasn't his conception of human nature the Elizabethan, pseudo-scientific one?

Worth: In many ways it was. But he went much deeper.

Townly: Much deeper?

Worth: Yes.

Townly: Does anyone other than an English teacher think so?

Worth: Yes. Many others do.

Townly: Name one. I mean some recognized authority in some modern field of scientific investigation.

Worth: Dr. John A. Dorsey of the graduate faculty of the College of Medicine of the University of Michigan.

Townly: Dorsey the authority in the field of medical psychiatry?

Worth: I happen to know that he does because a friend of mine was taking a course in counselling and guidance at the university this summer, and among the collateral texts that were required reading was Dorsey's definitive work *THE FOUNDATIONS OF HUMAN NATURE*. I happened to pick it up one day and was altogether elated to find that in two of the crucial chapters he cites four Shakespearean passages as giving the clearest statements of his points available. In fact, he quotes Jacques' famous speech in *AS YOU LIKE IT* concerning the seven ages or stages of man's development in entirety. And not in a footnote, either.

Glory: That wonderful speech beginning "All the world's a stage . . ."

(A HUSH FOLLOWS GLORY'S RECITATION. AND THEN DR. TOWNLY SPEAKS, ALMOST AS IF EMBARRASSED.)

Townly: You know I'm awfully glad you told me that about Dorsey, Miss Worth. I have a friend . . . I should say lady friend . . . a medical technician . . . who really loves Shakespeare but always acts a little apologetic about him—the way one might talk about the Parthenon in whispers, you know.

Worth: I do know. I too have a friend—following your lead, perhaps I had better say gentleman friend—who just takes for granted that the psychological presentation of character in literature began with Henry James! And there's a dear soul right here in my own department who thinks that the work being done nowadays in the field of general semantics has reduced everything said or written before Stuart Chase—or at least Korzybski—to the level



of medieval superstition. You can imagine with what delight I occasionally point out the fact that Shakespeare was as conscious of the limits of language as any of our present-day semanticists are!

Glory: I didn't know that, Miss Worth. All I can think of is "A rose by any other name . . ."

Worth: That alone would be enough, wouldn't it? But there is that speech of the wise clown Feste in *Twelfth Night* "To see this age! A sentence is but a cheveril glove to a good wit. How quickly the wrong side may be turned outward! . . . I would my sister had no name . . . her name's a word and to dally with that word might make my sister wanton . . . indeed words are very rascals . . ." (III, i.) And time and again in the plays Shakespeare shows with tremendous emotional impact the utter ridiculousness of merely verbal advice and verbal consolation in times of sorrow particularly.

Townly: It seems to me I've heard whole lectures that did nothing but make that very point in quite involved and round-about ways.

Worth: I know I have! More and more it seems to me that much of what passes for the very latest thing is merely a sort of rehash of an idea that Shakespeare expressed. Much better than any of our high-powered popularizers of today could do it! But to get back to your paper, Glory. I think the first thing the teacher must do is to get clear in his own mind how much Shakespeare has to tell people right here, right now. For instance, people all over the world—and especially young people—are in the midst of one of the most tremendous struggles ever to shake the world. The conflict is basic to practically everything else—regardless of whether it's colder or hotter today than it was yesterday!

Townly: I knew that sooner or later you ladies would get over into my field.

Worth: Your field and my field are both on the same big farm, Dr. Townly. I really wish they'd never been fenced off separately—at least with such a high fence, anyway. But of course before becoming a "human relationologist"—or is it "—osophist"? you must have had considerable work in the field of political science. In fact, despite what I've

just been saying, I think perhaps you can state for both Glory and me the essential conflict which has brought on the present big struggle for control of the world.

Townly: I can't, but someone I know can. I don't mean *know personally*. As a matter of fact the man's dead now; physically dead, that is—but in some ways I think he's more alive than ever.

Glory: You don't mean Shakespeare, do you?

Townly: No—I've just learned he's still with us. I am talking about Robert H. Jackson, a Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court. At the time of his death last year he was working on a series of lectures he was preparing to give at Yale University. He had completed writing down several of them, and after his death the Yale Press printed them along with some he had been working on but hadn't finished. In the first one he did finish, he said

"What we face today is the climax of a long-gathering conflict between opposite poles of thought. Our traditional high valuation of liberty conflicts with the totalitarians' high valuation of group interest . . . Communism, Naziism, and Fascism have each made phenomenally successful drives to capture the minds and loyalties of numerous and aspiring peoples . . . Their doctrine teaches that there is no such thing as natural law or impartial justice, that the law is and should be the weapon of the class in power . . . that law rests on the authority of force and not on any inherent rightfulness, that the object of its projection is the dominant group rather than the individual . . ."

Worth: Could anything be more demoralizing? Oh, Glory—you see, I'm sure you do. Either we go along with the founding fathers in the conviction that our human experience is based on the eternal laws of Nature and of Nature's God, *or* we end up in the opposite camp, and look upon the laws as being only the wishes or whims of whatever gang happens to have the most machine guns.

Townly: Bravo, Miss Worth!

Worth: Are you with me?

Townly: Thus far I am.

Worth: Well, for all practical purposes, that's far enough. In any case I am as sure as I'm standing here that in his plays Shakespeare gave the most nearly complete *demonstration*



of the point that can be found anywhere. It wasn't new, of course, in his time. Centuries before him, Sophocles had shown the princess Antigone defying the dictator's decree:

"This law was not from Zeus, nor the just gods  
That rule below. I never did believe  
That any mortal power could abrogate  
The unwritten laws, eternal in the heavens.  
Those laws are not today's nor yesterday's:  
Those laws are everlasting. No man can  
Persuade me to go counter to them: they  
Are given by the gods in Heaven above."

And Dante in the heart of the Middle Ages showed in his *DIVINE COMEDY* a universal structure of moral and spiritual values. But in play after play, comedies and tragedies, Shakespeare declares the wonderful truth in terms of actual personal living experience. Not in the hereafter, but in the actual world of flesh and blood and desire. He shows that everyone is morally responsible for his actions; that while external circumstances influence, they do not control human choices. Even Edmund, the arch-villain in *KING LEAR*, says:

"This is the excellent foppery of the world, that  
when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeit of  
our own behavior—we make guilty of our disasters  
the sun, the moon, and the stars, as if we were  
villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion  
. . . and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting  
on . . . " (KL: I, ii)

Townly: You invariably surprise me, Miss Worth. I was sure you were going to quote that speech in *JULIUS CAESAR*.

Worth: "The fault, dear Brutus . . . "

Glory: Ah, yes, Dr. Townly, do you know that little snatch of dialogue in *TWELFTH NIGHT* where Antonio or somebody—I guess they're all Shakespeare, aren't they?—says:

"In nature there's no blemish but the mind;  
None can be called deformed but the unkind.  
Virtue is beauty . . . " (TN: III, iv)

Townly: That reminds me of Keats' famous declaration.

Worth: Taken together they comprise the sum total of human philosophy, I believe. The new school of depth psychol-

ogists are saying that the crucial dynamisms of personality have a religious orientation, whether we recognize it or not! But in literature you get—I mean in the great literature you get the different *poles* of the orientation in such a way as to deal consciously with them without having to delve down into the subconscious or semiconscious or even unconscious. The final unity of the different values is a point that needs to be made over and over again nowadays when so many psychologists and pseudo-psychologists are insisting that human beings are just clever animals, motivated entirely by the desire to enhance their poor little egos—just as automatically as the animals are moved by the sheer drives of hunger and thirst.

Glory: But Shakespeare expressed the other idea dramatically too, didn't he? I remember how in *ROMEO AND JULIET* Romeo forces the poor apothecary to sell him the poison by making him identify himself with his poverty, and making him think that anyone in *his* low position didn't have any choice.

Worth: Oh yes! Shakespeare was just as much aware as any of us are of the materialistic line of thought and the terrible power it has to subvert a person's power of conscience. And he knew too that much of the power of evil is simply the habituation of a person's will to destructive courses of action. You remember how, in *MACBETH*, the decision to kill Duncan develops gradually, after much deliberation, and then how the decision to kill Banquo follows logically as a precautionary measure—just in case, you know—just how the decision to destroy Lady Macduff and her wee bairns is simply a means of releasing emotional tension. Frustrated by the escape of Macduff to England, our hero declares:

“ . . . I will tomorrow and betimes I will, to the  
Weird sisters. More shall they speak,  
For now I am bent to know, by the worst means,  
The worst. . . . I am in blood stepped in so far  
That should I wade no more, returning were as  
Tedious as go o'er. Strange things I have in  
Head that will to hand, that must be acted ere  
They may be scanned.” (III, iv)



Townly: That last pair of lines is Shakespeare's dramatic variation of a characteristically medieval idea: the power of reason is the light of the soul; the divine element in us, *et cetera*.

Worth: Well, isn't it? Aren't we more able to live intelligently if we believe that than we are if we believe that what we call reason is merely the meeting point of passion and desire?

Townly: Well, if you put it that way, of course. You know, to me, Miss Worth, as I've been following your various statements, there's developed in my mind a realization of another very significant psychological point that Shakespeare made. Are you either of you at all familiar with the work that Dr. Pick, the plastic surgeon, has for some time been doing in the state prison at Joliet?

Worth: No.

Glory: It is evident, Dr. Townly, that our social spheres differ rather widely.

Townly: Oh, Dr. Pick isn't an inmate of the prison. He's a prominent surgeon in Chicago who, after seeing how many of his patients had responded so well to the removal of various facial deformities—or maybe in line with your TWELFTH NIGHT lines, I should say *peculiarities*, Glory—Dr. Pick decided to see if there was any relation between the behavior that society calls criminal and the physical appearance of the person thus criminally misbehaving.

Glory: I should think a glance at those dreadful "Most Wanted" mugs' pictures in the post office would show that.

Worth: No, Glory.

Townly: Definitely no, Glory. Dr. Pick went to the prison and gave every prisoner up for parole a chance to volunteer for plastic surgery—that is, every one who had a facial deformity that he thought was going to handicap him when he left the place. He could have it removed *gratis*, for free.

Glory: And—?

Townly: Many did volunteer. And the over-all result has been that the Joliet penitentiary has had a phenomenal decrease in parole violations.

Worth: Isn't that grand?

Townly: Of course that information is grist for my mill in several courses. But what brought it forth here was the realization that Shakespeare was as aware of the tremendous power of the misvaluations of mere appearances as Dr. Pick is! In an undergrad speech course I took we had to learn some Shakespeare and perform it in class. The girl across the aisle from me dared me to do Richard Third's soliloquy.

Worth: And you did.

Glory: Some freshmen around here would call that type-casting.

Townly: Yes to both your statements.

Worth: I wonder, Dr. Townly. Can you still remember some of it?

Townly: All of it. You see, I did it in grand style. Ha.

Worth: Dr. Townly, would you mind . . . I mean only Glory and I are here . . . and I would like to know . . .

Townly: You mean can I still give it?

Worth: Yes.

Townly: I don't know.

Glory: Oh, please do! Try, anyway!

Townly: All right—you asked for it; I might even say you begged for it.

THEY AGREE—HE GIVES THE SOLILOQUY—THEY ARE DEEPLY MOVED. SOON AFTER HE FINISHES HE CLEARS HIS THROAT AND SAYS:

And now, Miss Worth, that you have heard me as Richard, may we return to the discussion? I have a very pertinent—or maybe you'll think it's impertinent—qualification to introduce that I think may render null and void some of the ideas we've been so happily agreeing on.

Glory: Oh, it *was* type-casting, Miss Worth!

Worth: Let's wait and see, Glory. Patience must have her perfect work, you know. Please do say anything you feel like saying, Dr. Townly.

Townly: Well, then. Granted that Shakespeare's plays are based on the conception that there is a moral order in the world—that people can control the *general* course of events by living according to moral principles—



Worth: Yes?

Townly: The corollary of that idea—the idea or ideal of equality among men is missing, isn't it? I mean, after all, *wasn't* our boy William something of a Grade-A snob? As a matter of fact, isn't it pretty clear that he despised the *groundlings* in the audience, and always showed the commoners in his plays as stupid, silly people.

Worth: *Oh no!*

Glory: *Hm-um!*

Townly: How about the mob in Julius Caesar?

Worth: How about the mobs everywhere? In Julius Caesar he showed a mob of ignorant Roman citizens, but in King Lear he shows a mob of nobility! I mean in that incredible scene involving the blinding of the Duke of Gloucester *not* by his serfs or the tenantry—but by those holding the highest positions in the kingdom.

Glory: And who tries to stop them? One of the servants, a better person than any of them; a good man who gets killed for his attempt!

Townly: I feel at a serious disadvantage in this—you see, I don't know the plays at all well; and I'm inclined to think of equality as a more or less strictly legal concept. My training, no doubt.

Worth: And of course our training has nothing to do with it. I've had only the past seven hundred years at it; and Glory wrote her term paper last year on the democratic implications of the plays! Of course we can drown you with *our* examples. But you tell us, now. I do wish you would enlighten us a little as to how the idea of equality did develop in law and politics.

Townly: So far as we can determine now, the idea began to grow among the Jewish people at least a thousand years before the time of Christ. It was quite a unique concept, quite independent of the political philosophy of Greece, which always assumed the necessity of human slavery—enslavement of the lower groups in each *polis*, political unit, which in Greece happened to be the *city* state. But in Israel and Judaea it had been so developed by the time of Christ that when He enunciated the highest ethical standard in the so-called Golden Rule, it was in no sense a

novelty. The Old Testament abounds in stories as well as prophetic exhortations involving the principle of equality among men in the divine-human situation. The confrontation of King David by the prophet Nathan, "Thou art the man!" is the most dramatic case in point. But in the field of legal theory as such—that is, jurisprudence—the theory was first propounded among the Romans. By Cicero. I know his words by heart: "Right reason, natural law, is diffused among all men, and since all are capable of understanding it, it is the same for Rome as for Athens, the same at one time as at another . . . for . . . . There is no thing so like or so equal to one another as all of us are to one another . . . if . . . corruption of custom and . . . variation of opinion did not induce an imbecility of minds and turn them aside from the course of nature, no one would more resemble himself than all men would resemble all men. . . whatever definition we give to man is applicable to all mankind." Throughout the Middle Ages, despite the hierarchical arrangement of all the existing societies, the idea survived on the level of theory in the scholastic philosophy. But it was not until the Renaissance that Robert, Cardinal Bellarmine—an Italian contemporary of Shakespeare's, by the way—stated categorically, two hundred years before our Declaration of Independence, that "All men . . . are equal."

Worth: I'm beginning to see why you're generally considered one of our best teachers.

Townly: Thank you; and now it's your turn. Tell me where Shakespeare shows the commoners as sympathetically as he does the upper crust.

Worth: Well, as I said before, Glory wrote a paper last year on the subject, and I'm quick to admit she probably has the material better in mind than I do.

Glory: Well, in some scenes he actually shows the common people *more* sympathetically than he does the upper crust. In *King Lear*, as Miss Worth said a few minutes ago, he shows the servant as being morally superior to his social superiors; and I found in *TIMON OF ATHENS* (I think it's a sad demonstration of the depth to which genius can fall, by the way) the only decent people outside of Timon are the servants . . . I remember I made a lot in

my paper of a little passage in TWELFTH NIGHT (it's my *favorite*, by the way, as you might know from the number of times I've mentioned it). After the wise clown Feste has sung a song for the music-loving Duke, the Duke says, "Here's for thy pains." And the clown says, "No pains, sir. I take pleasure in singing, sir." To me, anyway, it's clear that Shakespeare meant to show that the so-called inferior person actually may have a better enjoyment of the beauty of art than the so-called superior people do. And certainly Shakespeare shows that the people lower in the social scale may have much keener sensitiveness than the ones higher up . . . There's that wonderful scene in RICHARD SECOND where the queen curses the poor gardener who brought her the news of her husband's overthrow—

Townly: A queen cursing one of her subjects?

Worth: Yes. She says: "Pray God the plants thou graft'st may never grow." And when she and her retinue of ladies have left the stage, he, the cursed man, blesses her, saying:

"Poor queen! So that thy state might be no worse,  
I would my skill were subject to thy curse.  
Here did she fall a tear; here in this place  
I'll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace:  
Rue, even for ruth, here shortly shall be seen  
In the remembrance of a weeping queen."

Glory: And that's the last speech, not only of the scene, but of the act too! It's almost as if Shakespeare deliberately used for his emotional climax the identity of the gardener as a more sympathetic—and in that sense—better person than the queen was.

Townly: Of course, a *romantic* writer would do that. But what would a realistic writer do?

Worth: If he were *completely* realistic, I think he would *try* to create the effect Shakespeare did. The fundamental opposition isn't, after all, between romanticism and realism. It's really between idealism and materialism.

Townly: You're sure about that?

Worth: One of the few things.

Glory: Where was I? Oh, yes. It's the jailer—of all people—in CYMBELINE, who says: "I would we were all of one



mind, and one mind good." There's a world of meaning in that—maybe the man was reading Cicero, getting ready for his doctoral prelims. We'll just have to admit that many, many times Shakespeare did present the lower class of people in a ridiculous light. Juliet's nurse, for instance. But she's somehow *universally* ridiculous. If I could say *how* rather than *somehow*, I could write like Shakespeare, I suppose . . . Anyway, there she is: a woman for the ages to enjoy, even if not to admire especially. And there's Mistress Quickly too. And Bottom in MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM and Dogberry in MUCH ADO; they really are foolish with a capital "F"! But it's Bottom who holds the whole play together, comfortably at home on all levels of society whether in Athens or the enchanted forest. And without Dogberry's blundering knowledge I think MUCH ADO would have had to be a tragedy and not a comedy at all.

Worth: Oh, maybe not, Glory. Shakespeare had greater imaginative resources than we do. I think he could have some other way to put across the idea indicated by the title MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING. At least the saturnalia of marriages brought about in AS YOU LIKE IT is clearly indicated by the title, don't you think?

Glory: I suppose so, but of course, as you kept telling us, we don't actually *know*—we can only try to get at the truth as nearly as possible. I remember I thought I really had it when I showed that it was the professional rascal Autolycus in THE WINTER'S TALE who personified Shakespeare's conception of the person without sympathy for other people. After reciting in detail the tortures that will be inflicted on the old shepherd and his son he says: "But what talk we of these traitorly rascals, whose miseries are to be smiled at . . . ?" Coming from the rascal himself, doesn't that prove the point? Practically, I mean?

Townly: It does if you want it to.

Worth: And Glory and I do want it to. But seriously, Dr. Townly, on the grounds of external evidence, quite apart from our interpretations and wishful thinking, I think it can be shown that Shakespeare did have a very highly developed social imagination—that he did assume a progressive relationship toward the social attitudes of his audience.

Townly: I'm listening.

Worth: In the year 1594 there was an outbreak of anti-Semitism in the city of London, precipitated by the conviction—on trumped-up evidence—of Elizabeth's personal physician, Dr. Roderigo Lopez. He was a refugee from Portugal, and had lived in England for more than forty years; and despite many restrictions he had achieved the position of leader of his profession. For some reason unknown to us, the powerful Earl of Essex (who later of course led an abortive revolution against the queen) committed the old doctor to the Tower of London. There, under the extremity of torture, enough statements of an ambiguous nature were extracted from him to cause him to be convicted of plotting to poison Elizabeth. Even though after the torture was over he repudiated the statements on which he had been convicted, and even though Elizabeth herself believed him innocent, enough anti-Semitism had been whipped up in the city to force her to sign his death warrant. In accordance with the brutal customs of the time, he was executed. The crowd jeered at his last-minute declarations of his innocence. His four daughters were present. Capitalizing on the mob spirit, the Admiral's Men—the company that was the chief rival of Shakespeare's company—revived an old play of theirs, *THE JEW OF MALTA*. In it, Barabas was the central character, and Marlowe endowed him with every attribute of villainy; he was shown as being utterly devoid of every human quality, and the play enjoyed tremendous success. To compete with this extravaganza of horror and violence, Shakespeare's company apparently decided to present a play in which the central figure was also a man of the Jewish faith. With what result? We know, from his earlier plays *TITUS ANDRONICUS* and *HENRY SIXTH*, that if he wanted to, he could surpass Marlowe in the projection of sheer, towering violence and horror. But did he do so? The fact that he did not is in my mind conclusive evidence that he was trying to show them *through* Shylock the essential humanity of the Jews *and* of the members of the audience themselves. What more eloquent assertion of minority rights can we find anywhere than "Hath not a Jew eyes? . . ."

Glory: Oh, please go on.

Townly: Yes. Don't stop.

Worth: "Hath not a Jew hands . . .?"

(CONTINUES MV III, i, through line 76)

SILENCE.

Glory: "Thou torturest me . . . It was my turquoise, I had it from Leah . . . I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys."

Worth: Oh, Glory, when I hear you read, I'm surer than ever you're going to be one of the best teachers we've ever turned out!

Glory: Thank you, Miss Worth . . . I really must be going . . . Good-bye, Dr. Townly.

Townly: Good-bye, Glory. See you in the funny papers.

Worth: I'm so glad you said that. I keep forgetting that in many ways they're all just children. I wouldn't have embarrassed her for the world.

Townly: No. . . . You know, Miss Worth, there's something I think I should tell you.

Worth: Oh?

Townly: Yes I do. Just ten years ago this fall I was in Chicago and went to see the Theatre Guild's production of *THE WINTER'S TALE*.

Worth: Yes!

Townly: I was so deeply impressed by the way the speeches of Perdita and Florizel at the shepherd's festival were given that when I got home I read and reread that scene until I *knew* it.

Worth: Bravo!

Townly: Do you know it?

Worth: I certainly do. Do you know it well enough to—

Townly: With some help, maybe. (PAUSE) Let's get the show on the road.

Worth: All right. This brief case is her basket of flowers.



Townly: No—

Worth: I said—

Townly: It's a basket of flowers.

(THEY READ WINTER'S TALE IV, iii, 11. 112-155; PAUSE)

Worth: You know, I don't believe anyone is coming to give us our keys, do you?

Townly: I haven't thought so for quite a while.

Worth: Me either.

Townly: Which way?

FINIS

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## SUMMER WORKSHOP

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